

Technologies Across Nebraska Community Information Technology Survey

Results and Recommendations

May 12, 2003

Survey Results

Surveys were sent to 25 applicants for the Community IT Planning and Mini Grant program. Sixteen surveys were returned, yielding a response rate of 64%. The survey results should not be interpreted as representative of all communities in Nebraska. However, the survey results do provide a good indication of the IT-related training needs of the communities most likely to participate in programming offered by Technologies Across Nebraska.

Information Technology Committees

Eighty-one percent of the respondents indicated that their communities had technology committees. Several respondents indicated that their local technology committee has been in existence for ten years. Other respondents indicated that their committees were less than a year old.

Importance to the future of your community

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of eight areas of technology development. Seven out of the eight areas were rated as important or very important by nearly 90% of the respondents. Only using technology to provide government services was rated as important or very important by less than 88% of the respondents. The areas evaluated and the percentage of respondents rating the area as important or very important are listed below:

- Developing a technology plan (100%)
- Fostering teleliteracy (94%)
- Using technology to expand access to health care (94%)
- Encouraging e-commerce (94%)
- Pursuing IT-related economic development (94%)
- Identifying funding sources for technology projects (88%)
- Using technology to enhance educational opportunities (88%)
- Using technology to provide government services (63%)

Three respondents listed other areas that were important to the future of their community. The areas listed include:

- Technology related to entrepreneur development
- Technology related to youth entrepreneur development
- Education business owners and consumers on effective use
- E-commerce education and training for retail businesses

Interest in participating in educational opportunities

Respondents indicated a strong level of interest in participating in educational opportunities on technology-related development. At least 75 percent of the respondents indicated interest or great interest in participating in educational opportunities in six of the eight topics listed. Using technology to provide government services received the lowest interest ratings with only 50 percent of the respondents indicating interest or great interest in participating in programming on this topic.

The topics and the percentage of respondents indicating interest or great interest in participating are listed below:

- Pursuing IT-related economic development (88%)
- Developing a local technology plan (81%)
- Using technology to enhance educational opportunities (81%)
- Using technology to expand access to health care (81%)
- Encouraging e-commerce (81%)
- Identifying funding sources for technology projects (75%)
- Fostering teleliteracy (69%)
- Using technology to provide government services (50%)

Delivery Methods and Activities

The most preferred delivery methods of educational programming are a bimonthly e-mail newsletter, Web site resources, workshops (one-half day), and conferences (one day). Delivery methods and the percentage of respondents indicating interest or great interest are listed below:

Bimonthly e-mail newsletter (87%)
Web site resources (81%)
Workshops--half day (75%)
Conferences--one day (69%)
Videoconference workshops--1 to 2 hours (60%)
E-mail discussion list (56%)
Web streaming (50%)
Speakers bureau (50%)
Regional meetings of IT committees (50%)
Videotapes (47%)

Distance Willing to Travel

Forty-four percent of the respondents would travel 51 to 100 miles to attend a conference or workshop. Twenty-five percent would travel 100 to 200 miles. Twenty-five percent would travel 10 to 50 miles. Only six percent would be willing to travel over 200 miles.

Conference Fees

Fifty-six percent of the respondents would be willing to pay \$26-\$59 to attend a one day conference.

Community IT Toolkit

Eighty-one percent of the respondents had visited the Community IT Toolkit Web site. Of those who had visited the toolkit Web site, seventy-seven percent rated the toolkit as moderately or extremely useful.

Usefulness of Web Resources

Resource listings, funding opportunities, and workbooks which provide step by step instructions were the Web resources rated as the most useful by respondents. The Web resources and the percentage of respondents rating each as moderately useful or extremely useful are listed below:

- Resource listings (87%)
- Funding opportunities (87%)
- Workbooks which provide step by step instructions (73%)
- FAQs (67%)
- Case studies (64%)
- Video clips (40%)
- Bulletin board (40%)

One respondent also asked for resources which focused on the uses and benefits of technology in agriculture.

Gap Analysis

Educational Opportunities

The topics in which respondents expressed the greatest interest in receiving training are:

- Pursuing IT-related economic development (88%)
- Developing a local technology plan (81%)
- Using technology to enhance educational opportunities (81%)
- Using technology to expand access to health care (81%)
- Encouraging e-commerce (81%)

Of these four topics, the need for additional training opportunities is greatest for pursuing IT related economic development. Currently no programming is addressing IT-related economic development. Some resources on this topic are available through the *Community IT Toolkit* and through the Department of Economic Development, though.

Delivery Methods

The most preferred delivery methods are a bimonthly e-mail newsletter; Web site resources; workshops, and conferences. Currently a bimonthly newsletter on IT-development is not available. Developing a bimonthly newsletter would be relatively inexpensive and easy.

The TAN and Community IT Toolkit Web sites currently provide information on technology-related development and are perceived as useful resources. Resource listings, funding opportunities, and workbooks which provide step by step instructions were the Web resources rated as the most useful by respondents. The Community IT Toolkit currently contains resource listings and limited information on funding opportunities. The list of funding opportunities can be expanded. The Community IT Toolkit contains a workbook on IT planning and assessment. Additional workbooks could be developed on other topics.

There may be a need for regional workshops—especially on pursuing IT-related economic development. Since the Building Information Age Communities Conference which was held last year, TAN has not sponsored a workshop or conference on IT-related development. Congressman Osborne's office has sponsored a number of e-commerce workshops across the state. Those workshops, however, have not addressed other issues related to IT-related economic development.

Recommendations

1. Publish a bi-monthly e-mail newsletter on technology-related development.
2. Continue to maintain and update the TAN and Community IT Toolkit Web sites.
3. Add funding information to the Community IT Toolkit Web site.
4. Work with TAN partners to develop and deliver regional workshops on IT-related economic development.
5. Continue the IT Planning and Mini Grant program.